



## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES SAFETY POLICY MEMORANDUM

POLICY NUMBER: 15	DATE: April 17, 2002
TITLE: Incident Investigation	APPROVED BY: Martin McIntyre

### REFERENCE

Title 8, California Code of Regulations, Chapter 4, Subchapter 4, Section 1509

Title 8, California Code of Regulations, Chapter 4, Subchapter 7, Section 3203

City of Fresno Injury and Illness Prevention Program

### POLICY

To establish guidelines to be used in the investigation and review of occupational accidents, illnesses, and near-miss incidents. These guidelines may also be used in reviewing emergency operations incidents.

### ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS

The primary purpose of accident investigation and analysis activities is to prevent accidents. As such, investigation or analysis must produce factual information leading to corrective actions that prevent or reduce the number of accidents. The more complete the information, the easier it will be to take effective corrective action.

### TYPES OF INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS

For purposes of accident prevention, investigations must be fact-finding, not fault-finding; otherwise, they can do more harm than good. This is not to say responsibility should not be fixed where personal failure has caused injury, nor that such persons should be excused for the consequences of their actions. It does mean the investigation itself should be concerned only with the facts. The investigating individual, board, or committee must not be involved with any disciplinary actions resulting from the investigation.

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A variety of accident investigation and analysis techniques are available to the investigator, some of them more complicated than others. The choice of a particular method depends upon the purpose and orientation of the investigation. Using the Job Safety Analysis is one method that may be used to investigate because the basic steps and relative hazards have already been identified.

### WHEN TO INVESTIGATE ACCIDENTS

The longer the delay in examining the incident scene and interviewing the victim(s) and witnesses, the greater the possibility of obtaining erroneous or incomplete information. The incident scene changes, memories fade, and people discuss what happened with each other. Whether consciously or not, witnesses may alter their initial impressions to agree with someone else's observation or interpretation. Further, prompt incident investigation also expresses concern for the safety and well-being of employees.

All incidents should be investigated, regardless of severity of injury or amount of property damage. The extent of the investigation depends on the outcome or potential outcome of the accident. An accident involving only first aid or minor property damage is not investigated as thoroughly as one resulting in death or extensive property damage, that is, unless the potential outcome could have been disabling injury or death.

In incident investigation, the investigator must give priority to the health and safety of affected personnel (including any victims). When possible, rescue and first aid procedures should be used that disturb the accident scene as little as possible. Measures to protect equipment should also preserve evidence. When the area is secure and victims have received medical attention, appropriate notifications have been made, efforts can be concentrated on investigating the incident.

As with inspections, it is advisable to prepare investigation tools in advance. Having the necessary equipment ready will facilitate the investigation and certainly help to eliminate delays and other difficulties.

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

The incident investigation must answer many questions. Most of these questions are listed on the investigation report. Because of the infinite number of incident-producing situations, contributing factors, and causes, it is impossible to list all the questions that apply to all investigations.

The following questions are generally applicable, however, and will be considered in most accident investigations:

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What was the injured person doing at the time of the incident? Performing an assigned task? Maintenance? Assisting another worker?

Was the employee working on an unauthorized task? Was the employee qualified to perform the task and familiar with the process, equipment, and machinery? Was the employee trained? Was the employee a "competent person" as defined by OSHA?

What were other workers doing at the time of the incident?

Was the proper equipment being used for the task at hand (screwdriver instead of can opener to open a paint can, file instead of grinder to remove burrs on a bolt after it was cut)?

Was the injured person following approved procedures? Was a Job Safety Analysis completed for this task? Were the procedures used correct?

Is the process, operation, or task new to the area?

Was the injured person being supervised? What was the proximity and adequacy of supervision?

Did the employee receive hazard recognition training prior to the incident?

What was the location of the incident? What was the physical condition of the area when the incident occurred?

What immediate or temporary actions could have prevented the incident or minimized its effect?

Had corrective action been recommended in the past, but not adopted?

During the course of the investigation, the above questions should be answered to the satisfaction of the investigators. Other questions that come to mind as the investigation continues should be recorded.

## CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

Interviewing accident or injury victims and witnesses can be a difficult assignment if not properly handled. The individual being interviewed often is fearful and reluctant to provide the interviewer

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with accurate facts about the incident. The victim may be hesitant to talk for any number of reasons. A witness may not want to provide information that might implicate friends, fellow workers, or the supervisor. To obtain the necessary facts during an interview, the interviewer must first eliminate or reduce an employee's fear and anxiety by establishing good rapport with the individual. The interviewer must create a feeling of trust and establish open communication before beginning the actual interview. Once good rapport has been developed, the interviewer can follow this five-step method:

Discuss the purpose of the investigation and the interview (fact-finding, not fault-finding).

Have the individual relate his/her version of the incident with minimal interruptions. If the individual being interviewed is the one who was injured, ask what was being done, where and how it was being done, and what happened. If practical, have the injured person or eyewitness explain the sequence of events that occurred at the time of the incident. Being at the scene of the incident makes it easier to relate facts that might otherwise be difficult to explain.

Ask questions to clarify or fill in any gaps.

The interviewer should then repeat the facts of the accident to the injured person or eyewitness. Through this review process, there will be ample opportunity to correct any misunderstanding that may have occurred and clarify, any of the details of the incident.

Discuss methods of preventing recurrence. Ask the individual for suggestions aimed at eliminating or reducing the impact of the hazards that caused the accident. By asking the individual for ideas and discussing them, the interviewer will show sincerity and place emphasis on the fact-finding purpose of the investigation, as it was explained at the beginning of the interview.

## PREPARING THE INVESTIGATION REPORT

An incident is of significant interest to employees, who ask questions that reflect their concerns. Is there any potential danger to those in the immediate vicinity? What caused the incident? How many people were injured? How badly?

Those who investigate incidents should answer these questions truthfully and avoid covering up any facts. On the other hand, they must be certain they are authorized to release information, and they must be sure of their data.

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Because the incident report is the product of the investigation, it should be prepared carefully.

### Vehicle Accident

All vehicle accidents involving damage to public property and/or where damage or injury to private property or injury to citizens may be alleged, then the employee will immediately notify the appropriate law enforcement agency and his/her immediate supervisor, any other supervisor on duty if immediate supervisor is unavailable, and complete the Automobile Accident or Loss Notice by the close of the next working day or as soon as medically feasible.

Each publically owned vehicle will have, at a minimum, one copy of the Automobile Accident or Loss Notice in it at all times. Material handling and construction equipment are exempt from the requirements of this provision.

### Other forms of on-the-job (work related) accident, incident, or illness

Supervisors will complete the Supervisors Report of Accident by the close of the following working day or as soon as medically feasible, of any accident, incident, or illness involving a City of Fresno employee.

The original report will be reviewed by the Section Chief and Safety Officer who shall annotate their recommendations on the report. At any level from supervisor through Division Manager, a determination may be made to send the report to the Safety Committee for review and recommendation. Reports that may result in disciplinary action will not be forwarded to the Safety Committee. This recommendation may be overturned at any level and the report shall be forwarded to the Safety Committee and be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting.

### Near miss reporting

Near miss reporting is required to assist the Safety Officer and Safety Committee in identifying unsafe or unhealthful conditions and acts. The difference between what is generally called an "accident" and a "near miss" is the severity of the outcome. A near miss incident usually has no injury, illness or property damage related to the incident, however; there was a potential for serious consequences.

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A near miss incident report is to be completed whenever an employee was exposed to a potential hazard, but not injured or ill. These reports may be used to substantiate future claims. Examples of use:

A flying object struck an employee while working. The employee was not injured and required no medical attention.

A pipet was broken in the lab. The employee was exposed to the contents of the pipet and the broken glass. The employee had his personal protective equipment on and was not injured.

## REVIEW PROCESS

### Management Review

Management shall conduct a review with supervisors on a quarterly basis. The purpose of this review is to determine methods to reduce exposure of employees to hazards and to investigate strategies to mitigate hazards that have been discovered.

### Section Chief Review

Each section chief shall review the incidents associated with his/her section to determine if adequate safety measures are being taken to protect the employees.

### Safety Officer Review

The Division Safety Officer shall review each incident report associated to the Division and advise the Division Manager accordingly.

### Safety Committee Review

The Division Safety Committee shall review each incident report associated to the Division and make recommendations to the Division Manager accordingly. The Department Safety Officer and Safety Committee shall review those incidents that have been referred by the Divisions.